

**craft artists** explore the inherent expressive qualities of their chosen materials. Handling clay, glass, or paper is a highly sensory experience for the artist, while the finished object provides a sensory experience for the viewer.

*From the Ground Up* presents nearly fifty works by glass artists Paula Bartron and Beth Lipman, ceramicist Beth Cavener Stichter, and paper artist and metalsmith Jocelyn Châteauvert. These artists give their materials unexpected forms and meanings by experimenting with established techniques and exploring new ones. Bartron creates glass sculptures using minimal geometric forms. Lipman translates still-life paintings into three-

dimensional glass sculptures. Stichter's clay sculptures focus on human psychology articulated through animal forms. Châteauvert uses handmade paper and metalsmithing techniques to create tactile jewelry, lighting designs, and environments.

The *Renwick Craft Invitational* was established in 2000 to honor the creativity and talent of contemporary American craft artists whose work deserves greater attention. These pieces by Bartron, Lipman, Stichter, and Châteauvert are the result of individual visions refined through years of focused work. Working from the ground up, they begin with elements of the earth—clay, sand, fiber—as the catalysts for their imaginations.

*The Ryna and Melvin Cohen Family Foundation generously supports  
From the Ground Up: Renwick Craft Invitational 2007.*

# paula bartron

born San Mateo, California, 1946; resides in Stockholm, Sweden

At first glance the surfaces of Paula Bartron's boxes, basins, cylinders, and disks resemble those of unglazed ceramics. Her glass objects are not shiny or transparent. Much of the glass is hidden by rough, sand-encrusted surfaces, like objects excavated from archaeological sites. The super-tactile surface adds a blemished organic element to what can be a chilly and aloof substance.

The luminosity of her sculptures comes from their cores. Bartron restricts the amount of light that can penetrate through the surface, so her objects seem to glow from within like molten lava. This quiet but dramatic effect compels the viewer to look beyond the surface for the essence of the material. Bartron's geometric forms are neither stark nor rigid. Their undulating profiles, enhanced by subtle variations of form and color, render them soft and fluid.

*Paula Bartron is an American who lives and works in Sweden. Her work synthesizes Scandinavian modern design and the innovations of the American studio glass movement. A native Californian, she studied design, ceramics, and glass at the University of California, Berkeley. Thirty years ago, Bartron was one of a very few female glassblowers involved in the American studio glass movement. She moved to Europe to pursue a greater technical expertise in glass and was one of the first Americans to study at the Orrefors Glass School in Sweden. In 1975 Bartron founded the studio glass program at Konstfack (University College of Arts, Crafts, and Design) in Stockholm. While Bartron is well known in Europe and Asia as a bold and innovative artist, her work has rarely been shown in the United States.*

# beth lipman

born Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 1971; resides in Sheboygan, Wisconsin

Beth Lipman's glass compositions often re-create still-life paintings by Renaissance and baroque artists. Lipman takes stylistic tendencies of these periods—static composition, expressive light, and opulent decoration—to a third dimension as she translates the scenes into glass. Her objects, like those in the paintings, are chosen for their connotations. Overturned goblets and broken glass symbolize our human frailty and mortality.

At first glance, the sheer beauty of the glass in Lipman's renderings captivates the viewer. But the lack of color and definition frustrates the eye and demands a closer look. Viewers want to identify the individual parts in order to decipher the artist's meaning. Lipman's wall reliefs and tables become ethereal and timeless in glass.

*Beth Lipman began her career after earning her fine arts degree in 1994 at Tyler School of Art, Temple University in Philadelphia. Her work has benefited from several artist-in-residence and teaching positions at workshops across the country, notably Urban Glass in New York City and The Studio at the Corning Museum of Glass in Corning, New York. These programs gave her the opportunity to work with a team to create large-scale works. Her tour-de-force, Bancketje (Banquet), 2003, was created during a residency at the Creative Glass Center of America in Millville, New Jersey. Lipman lives in Sheboygan, Wisconsin, where she coordinates the artist-in-residence program at the John Michael Kohler Arts Center.*

# beth cavener stichter

born Pasadena, California, 1972; resides in Portage, Ohio

Beth Cavener Stichter's art is marked by her poignant observations of both animal and human nature. Her large, sculpted animals take on a human dimension as they move beyond the physical realm into the psychological. They are portraits of individuals interpreted in animal form, and some are self-portraits. Stichter depicts creatures in human postures and distorts the animals' physiognomies for dramatic effect. Her rendering of bone structure and sinew adds to the physicality of the figure.

Stichter's animals are caught up in complex situations. The artist calls on us to interpret their predicaments. Most are victims, laden with conflicting information and awaiting an uncertain outcome. In some works, the animals are trapped by mechanical elements—pulleys, ropes, chains, and gears. Her zoomorphic creatures read as metaphors for our human existence: how much control do we have and how much is beyond our control? Using the universal appeal of animals, Stichter confronts us with the biting reality of our human condition.

*Beth Cavener Stichter spent her youth working in her father's biology laboratory, where she learned to observe objectively and to record animals as specimens. She first studied sculpture at Haverford College in Pennsylvania, and completed her graduate studies in ceramics at Ohio State University in 2002. Several artist-in-residence programs have advanced her work and allowed her to experiment with large-scale works, especially one offered by the Archie Bray Foundation in Helena, Montana. These programs have been augmented by fellowships and grants, including a first prize from the prestigious Virginia A. Groot Foundation in 2005. Stichter lives and works in Portage, Ohio.*

# jocelyn châteauvert

born Des Moines, Iowa, 1960; resides in Charleston, South Carolina

The light-transmitting and structural qualities of handmade paper are accentuated in Jocelyn Châteauvert's work. Paper has traditionally been important only as a two-dimensional material, a ground or foundation for other materials. Châteauvert makes this "support" material the focal point of her art. Her fanciful sculpture, conceived with a twist of humor, offers a fresh vision. Relying on paper's fibrous and translucent layers, she designs lighting and room-sized environments that bring the natural world inside. The gentle swaying forms of her *Lily Clouds* recall the watery waves in which the paper was made.

Châteauvert trained as a metalsmith but later made papermaking her primary craft. She discovered that the opposite characteristics of handmade paper and silver made an intriguing combination in her jewelry designs. Her paper-silver jewelry moves and rustles when it is worn. As she saw greater potential for combining handmade paper with illumination, Châteauvert shifted her focus from jewelry to lighting design.

*Jocelyn Châteauvert currently lives and works in coastal South Carolina. Her work is influenced by its grasses, wetlands, and waterways. Originally from Iowa, she earned her undergraduate degree in design and a master's degree in jewelry and metalwork at the University of Iowa, Iowa City. Châteauvert developed her technical mastery through two exceptional teachers and innovators: Chunghi Choo, an internationally renowned metalsmith, and Timothy Barrett, one of the foremost scholars and craftsmen in the art of hand papermaking. In 1990, Châteauvert was an artist in residence at Middlesex Polytechnic in London. After returning to the United States, she launched a line of jewelry based first in San Francisco and later in Mount Vernon, Iowa. She added lighting designs to her product line in the late 1990s, .*



## paula bartron

For her cast pieces, Bartron pours molten glass into molds made of compacted sand. When the sand mold is broken away, she allows some of the sand that clings to the surface to remain. For her cylinders, Bartron blows glass into sand molds, then sifts glass powders onto the hot surfaces to add color.

Her boxes and basins are constructed from sand-cast bars of colored glass. Once these are cold, she slices them into bricks and blocks and assembles them into various forms, which are then fused together in a glass kiln. All of her forms are reworked to accentuate the edges and to allow light to penetrate.

*Paula Bartron works on a cylinder at a glass symposium in Nový Bor, Czech Republic, 2000.  
Photo by Susanne Frantz.*



## **beth lipman**

Like many studio glass artists, Lipman works independently and collaboratively with a team of gaffers to create some of her components. She participates in and directs the process. She blows and hand-sculpts molten glass to create her primary forms. She embellishes them by further flamework and by painting, gilding, or etching the glass. Lipman often uses silicone and adhesives to assemble the objects and to stage the final composition. Lipman is a master of many techniques, but does not allow virtuosity to become an end in itself. In her view, imperfections in the glass add to the composition rather than detract from it.

*Beth Lipman works in the hot shop at the Museum of Glass, Tacoma, Washington, 2006.  
Photo by Liz Lepance.*



## **beth cavener stichter**

Unlike most sculptors who view clay as an intermediary material toward a bronze casting, for Stichter the clay *is* the final form. She begins by sculpting hundreds of pounds of clay around steel armatures that sustain the weight and provide initial structure. The modeling stage is extremely physical: she beats, kicks, and pounds the clay, working it quickly so that it remains elastic and holds her marks. She then dissects the figure into smaller parts, removes them from the armature, and hollows them out by hand. After the parts have been fired in the kiln, she rejoins them so the seams are invisible.



Stichter's use of color may reinforce or overturn the viewer's immediate response to the animal's condition. Her selection and application of color are deliberate and exacting. While she uses some traditional glazing methods such as porcelain slips colored with oxides, she also applies paint after the work is fired in the kiln.

*Beth Cavener Stichter sculpts one of her figures in her studio, 2003. Photos courtesy of the artist.*



## jocelyn châteauvert

Châteauvert makes most of her paper from abaca fibers derived from the banana plant. She often over-beats the fibers to increase the sheen and opacity of her paper and employs traditional Western papermaking techniques to form sheets. Châteauvert works the paper, both wet and dry, in a variety of ways: cutting, scoring, folding, molding, layering, and sewing these sheets, so in the end it is difficult to see that she started with a flat sheet.

*Scratch*, her elaborate, three-layered paper curtain, combines numerous techniques. Walnut and red pigments in two of the layers introduce warmth and contrast to the material. Perforations, pleats, dimples, subtle marks, and aggressive manipulation highlight the tactility and resilience of the paper. Light dances on the surfaces and shadows introduce drama, while the rustle of the layers completes the sensory experience.

*Jocelyn Châteauvert works in her studio in Charleston, South Carolina, 2006.  
Photo by David Ross Puls.*



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